United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Southwestern Region 3
Carson National Forest
Camino Real Ranger District
P. O. Box 68
Penasco, New Mexico 87553
(505) 587-2255
FAX (505) 758-6236

File Code: 1950/2210
Date: February 6, 2009

Dear Interested Party:

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Camino Real Ranger District of the Carson National Forest is beginning the analysis of a proposal to continue livestock grazing on the Rio Chiquito and Trampas Allotments (see attached map). The proposed actions are described below for your review. Comments on the proposed actions should be as specific as possible to assist us in the analysis.[1] Although comments are welcome at any time, they will be most effective if received by March 2, 2009. Please mail comments to the address in the letterhead.

The two allotments are located on the southwest corner of the Camino Real Ranger District; south and east of the Picuris Pueblo and the communities of Penasco and Chamisal, and north of the community of Truchas, New Mexico. Prior to administration by the Forest Service, this area was in private ownership, and prior to that it was comprised of several historic land grants. Grazing, along with timber harvesting and other community uses of the land, has been a historic use of the area for over 100 years. The two allotments adjoin each other. Prior to 1993 they were managed as one allotment. A decision at that time separated the historic Trampas Allotment into the Rio Chiquito and Trampas Allotments. The western pastures of both allotments (to the west of State Highway 76) have vegetation treatment areas which were seeded to crested wheatgrass. These areas are still highly productive due to maintenance treatments which were conducted in the past, which included prescribed burning.

Proposed Action for the Rio Chiquito Allotment

The Forest Service proposes to authorize livestock grazing on the Rio Chiquito Allotment. The proposed action is designed to maintain or improve resource conditions in rangeland health, riparian vegetation, soil, and water conditions relative to livestock grazing. Some current grazing practices would be adjusted to resolve grazing related resource issues.[2] Components of the proposed action are:

- Authorize from 103 cow/calf units + 6 bulls to 180 cow/calf units + 9 bulls to continue grazing on the Rio Chiquito Allotment, utilizing a 6-7 pasture rotational grazing system

[1] Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action, and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

[2] Grazing management for the Rio Chiquito Allotment is administered through annual operating instructions. Annual operating instructions are the instrument for the implementation of specific management actions on an annual basis to achieve resource management objectives.

within the season 5/16-9/30. The 6-7 pastures to be used would be the Rio Chiquito, Cebadilla, Vallecitos, Cejita Mesa, Jacinto Canyon, and Lower Entranas Pastures, and eventually a newly created Lower Ojito Pasture (created from the lower portion of the Cebadilla Pasture). The Canada del Oso Pasture is not currently used by permitted livestock, due to difficulty of access and limited forage and water. This pasture would not be included in the rotational system, although incidental livestock use would be allowed. This pasture would primarily be dedicated to wildlife use.

- In vegetation treatment areas within Cejita Mesa, Jacinto Canyon, and Lower Entranas Pastures: 1) Maintain the productivity of historic vegetation treatment areas using prescribed burning, seeding, interseeding, brushhogging, or a combination of these methods. 2) Maintain an average 4" stubble height throughout the grazing season. Note that it is okay to have up to 60% end of season utilization on crested wheatgrass as long as the stubble height guideline is met.
- In Cejita Mesa Pasture: Repair Cejita East trick tank with a new apron and reservoir.
- In Jacinto Canyon Pasture: Improve and expand the existing corral.
- In Lower Entranas Pasture: Improve and expand the existing corral.
- In Canada del Oso: Do not schedule this pasture in the grazing schedule, but realize that it may get minimal incidental use off of Cejita Mesa Pasture.
- In Vallecitos Pasture: 1) Install a trick tank to provide water for this pasture. 2) Work with the NM Department of Tranportation to get their fence maintenance completed plus a cattleguard installed at the transfer station entrance on the highway right of way.
- In Cebadilla Pasture: 1) Install a temporary, portable cattleguard near the Chamisal fuelwood area, to be removed following closure of the fuelwood area. 2) Construct an earthen dam stock tank near section 29. 3) Create a new Lower Ojito Pasture from the lower portion of the current Cebadilla Pasture by constructing approximately ½ mile of fence in section 24 and installing a cattle guard. 4) Construct an earthen dam stock tank in section 13. 5) Install a cattle guard on road that goes to the community of Upper Ojito. 6) Extend the existing drift fence between Cebadilla and Rio Chiquito Pastures from ½ mile to 2 miles. 7) Construct an approximately 20' x 30' corral in Lower Ojito Pasture. 8) Install a cattle guard in section 20 at the forest boundary with the community of Llano San Juan.
- In Rio Chiquito Pasture: 1) Install a temporary fence around Osha Cienega Meadow and rest it for approximately two years. At that point, evaluate whether or not vegetation objectives are being met and determine if the fence is still needed or if the other improvements proposed in this alternative have been implemented (shorter season on the east side pastures, improving timing of use with drift fences, waters, cattle guards, salting and herding) and are sufficient to meet objectives in the Osha Cienega Meadow without the fence. 2) In lower Rio Chiquito Pasture, improve species composition and forage production of an estimated 60-75 acres of small Kentucky bluegrass dominated meadows by implementing best management practices (such as adjusting the timing, intensity and duration of grazing; seeding; contour furrowing; combination of contour furrowing and seeding).
- Allotment-wide: 1) Use prescribed burning to maintain previously thinned and/or burned areas. 2) Within riparian areas: maintain an average 6 inch stubble height throughout the grazing season/35% end of season utilization. 3) Within the goshawk post fledgling area (PFA) in Cebadilla and Lower Ojito Pastures: achieve a 20% maximum end of season utilization. 4) Within non-revegetation, non-riparian, and non-goshawk PFA areas: work towards a 40% end of season utilization/4 inch stubble height guideline. 5) Schedule grazing

in the western pastures to last until the end of July to take advantage of abundant forage and to allow a shorter season of use in the Rio Chiquito and Cebadilla Pastures to assist in meeting resource objectives in those pastures (note: this component of the proposed action is dependent on seasonal moisture conditions and may not occur every year).

Proposed Action for the Trampas Allotment

The Forest Service proposes to authorize livestock grazing on the Trampas Allotment. The proposed action is designed to maintain or improve resource conditions in rangeland health, riparian vegetation, soil, and water conditions relative to livestock grazing. Some grazing practices would be adjusted to resolve grazing related resource issues.[3] Components of the proposed action are:

- Authorize from 70 cow/calf units + 3 bulls to 124 cow/calf units + 6 bulls to continue grazing on the Trampas Allotment, utilizing a 5-6 pasture rotational grazing system within the season 5/16-9/30. The 5-6 pastures to be used would be the Lower Entranas 1 – 4, Canada Ancha, Canada Abeyta, and Trampas River Pastures.
- In vegetation treatment areas within Lower Entranas 1 – 4 and Canada Ancha Pastures: 1) Maintain historic vegetation treatment areas using prescribed burning, seeding, interseeding, brushhogging, or a combination of these methods. 2) Maintain an average 4" stubble height throughout the grazing season. Note that it is okay to have up to 60% utilization on crested wheatgrass as long as the stubble height guideline is met.
- In Canada Ancha Pasture: Construct a trick tank to provide water in this pasture.
- In Lower Entrañas 3 Pasture: Improve and expand the existing corral which is shared with the Rio Chiquito Allotment.
- In Cañada Abeyta Pasture: Reconstruct the existing trick tank to provide water in this pasture.
- In Trampas River Pasture: 1) Construct a holding pen near State Highway 76 and Forest Road 155. 2) Allow incidental use of the designated wilderness portion of the pasture after July 23rd. This delayed entry would help protect ptarmigan during nesting. (Note that this portion of the pasture has not been scheduled for use in the past 15 years. However, livestock was a permitted activity in this area when it was designated as wilderness in the NM Wilderness Act in 1980.) 3) Use herding and salting to achieve better distribution. 4) Improve species composition and forage production of an estimated 40-50 acres of small Kentucky bluegrass dominated meadows by implementing best management practices (such as adjusting the timing, intensity and duration of grazing; seeding; contour furrowing; combination of contour furrowing and seeding). 5) Construct a water source between Canada de los Alamos and La Joya, outside the designated wilderness.
- Allotment-wide: 1) Use prescribed burning to maintain previously thinned and/or burned areas. 2) Within riparian areas: maintain an average 6 inch stubble height throughout the grazing season/35% end of season utilization. 3) Within non-revegetation, non-riparian areas: work towards a 40% end of season utilization/4 inch stubble height. 4) Schedule grazing in the western pastures to last until the end of July to take advantage of abundant

[3] Grazing management for the Trampas Allotment is administered through annual operating instructions. Annual operating instructions are the instrument for the implementation of specific management actions on an annual basis to achieve resource management objectives.

forage and to allow a shorter season of use in the Trampas River Pasture to assist in meeting resource objectives in that pasture (note: this component of the proposed action is dependent on seasonal moisture conditions and may not occur every year).

Monitoring

Implementation monitoring would include periodic inspections to ensure compliance with term grazing permit terms and conditions. For example, range readiness would be monitored before the grazing season begins, stubble heights may be measured during the grazing season and utilization would be monitored at the end of the season. Effectiveness monitoring would determine if grazing standards and guidelines, grazing prescriptions, and Allotment Management Plan practices are effective in accomplishing the planned objectives. For example, vegetation condition and trend would be monitored at approximately ten-year intervals.

Needs for the Proposed Actions

1) Livestock grazing on National Forest System lands has contributed to the local economy and the stability of northern New Mexico communities for over a hundred years. On the Rio Chiquito and Trampas Allotments, there is a need for forage availability to support domestic livestock and contribute to the economic diversity and social well being of surrounding communities that depend on range resources for their livelihood.

2) There is a need to maintain the productivity of historic vegetation treatments on the western pastures of both allotments.

3) There is a need to improve the species composition in some Kentucky bluegrass dominated meadows in the eastern pastures of both allotments.

4) There is a need to improve highway safety by limiting the incidence of livestock presence along the state highway.

5) There is a need on the allotment and across the landscape for grassland meadows and open-canopied forested areas to have a productive herbaceous understory to provide forage for both wildlife and livestock.

We would like to know of any concerns or suggestions you may have about this proposal. If you have any questions, or if something is unclear, please contact Rangeland Management Staff Melvin Herrera, at (575-587-2255) at the Camino Real Ranger District.

Sincerely,

/S/ JOHN P. MIERA

JOHN P. MIERA
Enclosure: Background Information and Map

Background Information for the Rio Chiquito and Trampas Allotments

The Rio Chiquito Allotment includes approximately 33,903 acres located on the Camino Real Ranger District of the Carson National Forest in Taos and Rio Arriba Counties, New Mexico:

Township 21 North, Range 11 East, Sections 4-5.
Township 21 North, Range 12 East, Sections 3-6, 8-10, 15-16.
Township 22 North, Range 10 East, Sections 10-15, 22-27, 34-36.
Township 22 North, Range 11 East, Sections 7-22, 24-25, 28-33.
Township 22 North, Range 12 East, Sections 7, 18-21, 27-34. NMPM

The Rio Chiquito Allotment contains the following ephemeral and perennial streams: Rio Chiquito, Chamisal Creek, Rio de las Trampas, which are tributary to Embudo Creek, and Canada de las Entranas which is tributary to the Rio Grande. The allotment ranges in elevation from approximately 6,900 feet in the canyon bottoms along the western boundary bordering BLM land to 12,200 feet on the eastern boundary on the mountain tops.

The Trampas Allotment includes approximately 32,206 acres located on the Camino Real Ranger District of the Carson National Forest in Taos and Rio Arriba Counties, New Mexico:

Township 21 North, Range 10 East, Sections 1-3, 10-12, 14-15, 22
Township 21 North, Range 11 East, Sections 1-17, 20-24.
Township 21 North, Range 12 East, Sections 5-8, 15-22, 28-30.
Township 22 North, Range 10 East, Sections 34-36.
Township 22 North, Range 11 East, Sections 22-27, 31, 33-36.
Township 22 North, Range 12 East, Section 31. NMPM

The Trampas Allotment contains the following intermittent, ephemeral, and perennial streams: Rio de las Trampas and Canada de Ojo Sarco, which are tributary to Embudo Creek, and Cañada de las Entrañas and Rio de Truchas which are tributary to the Rio Grande. The allotment ranges in elevation from approximately 7,100 feet in the canyon bottoms along the western boundary bordering BLM land to 12,800 feet on the eastern boundary on the mountain tops.

Current Permitted Livestock Management

Livestock numbers permitted to the Rio Chiquito Livestock Grazing Association are 180 cow/calf pairs and 9 bulls for the grazing season of 5/16-9/30 on the Rio Chiquito Allotment. Management involves a six-pasture, deferred-rotation grazing system. The six pastures are the Lower Entrañas, Jacinto Canyon, Cejita Mesa, Cebadilla, Rio Chiquito and the Vallecitos Pastures. There is a seventh pasture, the Canada del Oso Pasture, which is not used in the grazing rotation due to the difficulty of access and limited forage and water. The two pastures east of State Highway 76 (Rio Chiquito and Cebadilla) are higher in elevation. Lower Entrañas, Jacinto Canyon, and Cejita Mesa, on the west side of SH76, have historic “revegetation areas”, which were treated for sagebrush control, planted with crested wheatgrass, and are still very productive. Water is typically the limiting factor in these pastures. The Vallecitos unit is scheduled to be grazed season long by one member who has a membership certificate for 6 c/c. The Vallecitos unit has not been used recently because of safety concerns due to lack of fencing by the

NMDOT. Adaptive management strategies used on the allotment allow for yearly adjustments in season of use, number of authorized livestock, and changes in grazing system based on resource conditions, forage availability, utilization, and other factors that may affect range condition.

Livestock numbers permitted to the Trampas Grazing Association are 124 cow/calf pairs and 6 bulls for a grazing season of 5/16-9/30 on the Trampas Allotment. Recently, management has consisted of utilizing a 5 pasture deferred rotation grazing system. There are seven pastures located on the allotment. The Cañada Abeyta pasture is used with the Entrañas number 3 pasture. The Cañada Ancha Pasture does not have water and has been used in the past few years by members of the Rio Chiquito Grazing Association as they have water on private land adjacent to the pasture. The other pastures on the allotment are the Entrañas numbers 1, 2, and 4, which are located west of state highway 76. The Trampas River pasture is the largest pasture and is located east of state highway 76 and is higher in elevation. Five of the western pastures (Entrañas 1-4 and Cañada Ancha) have historic "revegetation areas", which were treated for sagebrush control, planted with crested wheatgrass, and are still very productive. Water is typically the limiting factor in these pastures. Adaptive management strategies allow for yearly adjustments in season of use, number of authorized livestock, and changes in grazing system based on resource conditions, forage availability, utilization, and other factors that may affect range condition.

Existing Range Conditions

Table 1. Rio Chiquito Allotment Existing Range Conditions

Table 1

Parker 3 Step Cluster #	**Number of transects**	**Location**	**Vegetation Score**	**Soil score**
4	1	Ojo del Oso Meadow	71 Good →	86 Excellent →
Paced Transect	**Number of transects**	**Location**		
1	1	1st meadow inside Forest Boundary above Llano San Juan	61 Good →	62 Good →
2	1	Lower Entrañas	72 Good →	47 Fair →
3	1	Jacinto Canyon	67 Good →	64 Good →
5	1	Osha Cienega	53 Fair ↓	68 Good →

Table 2. Trampas Allotment Existing Range Conditions

Table 2

Cluster #	**Number of transects**	**Location**	**Vegetation Score**	**Soil score**
1	2	Below Tafoya ranch	54 Fair →	83 Excellent →

Cluster #	**Number of transects**	**Location**	**Vegetation Score**	**Soil score**
2	1	Upper Entrañas Canyon	60 Fair→	76 Good →
3	2	Upper Ojo Sarco canyon	53 Fair →	72 Good →
5	2	La Jolla Meadow	67 Good →	90 Excellent →
Paced Transect	**# of transects**	**Location**		
1	1	Lower Entrañas #4	65 Good →	51 Fair →